

WATERGATE: A GREEK CONNECTION?

By Daniel F. Gilmore

WASHINGTON

On June 17, 1972, five men were arrested for breaking into the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the plush Watergate complex and 14 years later, there may be an answer to a lingering question -- Why?

The Watergate break-in, The Nation magazine suggests in its May 31 edition, was staged to learn what the DNC knew about the Greek connection.

"One footprint turns up at every stage of Richard Nixon's criminal career from his election to the presidency in 1968, to the Watergate scandal, to the various attempts made to cover up that scandal," said the article, written by Christopher Hitchens.

"That footprint belongs to Thomas A. Pappas, an ultrareactionary Greek-American tycoon who lives in honorable retirement in Boston."

The "footprint," The Nation reported, was discovered only a month ago by Greek journalist Elias Demetracopoulos, an active foe of the dictatorship ruling Greece in the early 1970s.

Demetracopoulos, who lives in Washington, by his own efforts unearthed documents showing Pappas was involved in arranging illegal foreign donations to Nixon's election campaigns, had personally loaned \$50,000 to Nixon's attorney general, John Mitchell, and was allegedly involved in obtaining "hush money" for the Watergate burglars.

Demetracopoulos has confirmed to United Press International The Nation's account.

Pappas, a Greek immigrant, returned to Greece in the 1960s to amass a fortune in shipping and chemicals. He then shuttled between Athens and Washington where he became a financial backer of Vice President Spiro Agnew, who also is of Greek descent.

The magazine reports that hitherto unpublished material from the Watergate prosecutors' office showed that Pappas, despite his denials to investigative committees, contributed up to \$400,000 to Nixon's election campaign and solicited contributions from corporations and individuals, including foreign nationals, "in clear violation of U.S. law forbidding such donations."

During Nixon's first presidential campaign in 1968, the magazine reported, a suspicious DNC Chairman Larry O'Brien issued a statement saying, "I think that both Mr. Nixon and Mr. Agnew should explain their relationship with him (Pappas) and let the American people know what's going on."

O'Brien's call "might have been a shot in the dark, or it might not," the article said. "It became urgent for the president's men to find out what O'Brien knew and simultaneously to block any further avenue of inquiry."

Demetracopoulos had given evidence of the connection to O'Brien that the Greek KYP intelligence agency, which was subsidized by the CIA, was passing money to Pappas for relay to the Nixon-Agnew campaign fund.

When the Nixon administration learned this, Demetracopoulos ended up in the "bad books" of the CIA and was placed under FBI surveillance for years. It was only on April 16 that the CIA acknowledged publicly it had "no derogatory information" about him.

Pappas, in appearances before a Watergate grand jury, denied he had ever given money for a Watergate coverup.

"That was perjury," which went unpunished, the magazine said. Three congressional committees, under Nixon administration pressure, were unable to pin down the Pappas connection.

Meanwhile, The Nation said, the FBI was instructed by the State Department to "leak" false information to the Watergate committee that Demetracopoulos was "a dangerous communist."

The magazine said the White House, through the State Department, urged the Justice Department "to do everything possible to see if we can make a foreign agent's case or any kind of a case for that matter" against Demetracopoulos.

The man behind the State Department's request, the article said, was Henry Tasca, "Nixon's loyal ambassador to the Greek junta and a close personal friend of Pappas, who knew the dirty secret about the dirty money of 1968" -- the money funneled through the Greek KYP.